

Probating Melville's Posthumous Work, *Billy Budd*: Authorship in Self-Imposed Jingoism

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Introduction: “Buy me, borrow me, stare at me, steal me.”

Day after day, and week after week, the mysterious publications
haunted my walks, go where I might. . . . There they were in every

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town, large or small. I saw them in fruit-shops, in oyster-shops, in cigar-shops, in lozenge-shops. . . . Wherever the speculative daring of one man could open a shop, and the human appetites and necessities of his fellow-mortals could keep it from shutting up again—there it appeared to me, the unbound picture-quarto instantly entered, set itself up obtrusively in the window, and insisted in being looked at by everybody. Buy me, borrow me, stare at me, steal me. Oh inattentive stranger, do anything but pass me by!

Wilkie Collins (1824-89) expressed embarrassment at the commodity status of lowbrow literature. Though lowbrow literature pandered to the tastes of the audience that supported it, middle-class women, interestingly enough, the male writer was complicit in flooding the market with sensational novels and plays, and was thus deeply involved in mass-production capitalism and lionized in nineteenth-century England. To this sensational popular male writer, literary works by popular female writers seemed impersonated and obsequiously wooing for readers. This solicitation to customers in mass culture must have been far from innocuous; for in the worst scenario, the Victorian highbrow critic might have distorted this whining and downgraded the status of female writers to that of whores coquetting for philandering consumers. This outcry of Collins's must not have been irrelevant to Herman Melville (1819-91), an author who made a right-about-face from seafaring novels to domestic sensational novels for middle-class women. Melville wrote to Hawthorne's wife Sophia.

It really amazed me that you should find any satisfaction in that Book

[*Moby-Dick*]. It is true that some *men* have said they were pleased with it, but you are the only *woman*—for as a general thing, women have small taste for the sea. . . . My Dear Lady, I shall not again send you a bowl of salt water. The next chalice I shall commend, will be a rural bowl of milk. [8 January 1852 (*Corres.* 218-19)]

In the end Melville wrote the incestuously themed novel, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (1852), only to submit himself to poor sales. The direct reference to incest in *Pierre* exposed him to harsh criticism, branded him as a madman, and endangered his authorship. Some reviews severely criticized Melville.

HERMAN MELVILLE CRAZY [in capital letters].

[The Sept. 7, 1852, headline in the New York *Day Book* (Bercovitch 117)]

Pierre; or, The Ambiguities is, perhaps, the craziest fiction extant. . . . it might be supposed to emanate from a lunatic hospital rather than from the retreats pf the Berkshire.

[Charles Gordon Greene, unsigned review, Boston *Post*. 4 August 1852 (Branch 294-95)]

A bad book! Affected in dialect, unnatural in conception, repulsive in plot, and inartistic in construction. Such is Mr. Melville's worst and latest work.

Some reputations seem to be born of accident. There are commonplace men who on some fine day light, unknown to themselves, upon a

popular idea, and suddenly rise on the strength of it into public favor. They stride the bubble for a little while, but at last its prismatic hues begin to fade; men see that the object of their applause has after all but an unsubstantial basis, and when at length the frail foundation bursts, they fall back into their original obscurity, unheeded and unlamented. Mr. Melville has experienced some such success. . . . [W]e feel compelled to . . . freeze him into silence.

[George Washington Peck, from an unsigned review, *American Whig Review*. November 1852, xvi, 464-54 (Branch 314, 316)]

If writing sensational/domestic novels was a conduit to establishing authorship for popular women writers, then what was the conduit for the establishment of Melville's authorship? In the belief that Melville's last novel might attest to the very final phase of the author, and that readers in posterity should not allow the author to die intestate insofar as his posthumous novel can be expected to serve as his last will and testament for authorship, I will essay to clarify in this paper how Melville's authorship is finally (dis)integrated in his last fiction, *Billy Budd: Sailor (An Inside Narrative)* (1924).

I. Similarities to and Differences from Best-selling Female Writers

I enter the issue of Melville's authorship by pointing out several similarities and differences between the author and the women novelists of his day. In "The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids" (1855), Melville denounced the gender inequality prevalent in the patriarchic society and proved himself to be sympathetic to women to some degree. Profession-wise, he could be categorized into a group composed mainly of sensational writers,

mostly women: far from hiding his inclination for writing the sentimental/feminine, he put that inclination into practice in *Pierre*, the domestic novel in which the author is reflected in the image of Pierre, the main character of the selfsame novel as the poet author-hero, Vivian, the best-selling poet of "The Tear" and "The Weather: a Thought." In a way, Melville's politically and psychologically feminine topology might be allocated to the same locale occupied by the northern women of the middle class who, like Lydia Maria Child, felt the pressing need for an alliance between the women and racial others [black slaves] without prescience of how practical such an alliance actually was. Unlike Emerson, the passionate advocator of self-reliant subjectivity as an independent man (male), Melville praised affectionate interracial mutuality by invoking the very image of the great joint-stock company, declaring that he was politically closer to the racially minor groups, the groups excluded from the dominant Anglo-Saxon middle-class male, and the groups allotted, like most middle-class women, to marginal positions. Melville's self-conscious position of the subaltern led him to write "Benito Cereno" (1855), the tale in which the black slave Babo, by disguising himself as a Sambo and making himself baboonish and dependent upon his white master, proves to be shrewd enough to fabricate an (ir)reality pleasing only to the elite white. Accordingly, Melville ridiculed Amasa Delano, the captain of the American sealer, disclosing that the (ir)reality thus made could enable this American captain to falsely establish his own subjectivity, and that, to this mechanism of (un)making subjectivity, he was anesthetic. Moreover, in the vein of the contemporary best-selling women writers who often resorted to the image of marriage, Melville himself referred to that image in *Moby-Dick* (1851), though subtly and nonchalantly distorting that into the image of the homosexual marriage, namely the

marriage between Ishmael and Queequeg, the civilized and the uncivilized, the Christian and the heathen, the white and the non-white.

Though he may veer closer and closer to the field of women or the domestic, Melville remains straddled between two hemispheres, or to use Henry Murray's words, between "uncompromising dichotom[ies]": the one directly associated to the sea, apparently masculine adventure, "[o]pen space, freedom, adventure, danger, the heart, spontaneity, selfless benevolence, single-hearted dedication, passionate undirected thought, zeal for heaven and immortality, God, and insanity"; the other evolved behind the façade in the domicile, "closed or structured, slavishness, family obligations, domestic comforts, safety, the head, cool directed thinking, the calculations of self-interest, property, the world, and conventional commonsense" (xxvi-xxii). The former domain was associated with the genealogy of the canonical male writers involved in the masculine world, the writers represented by James Fenimore Cooper. The latter domain was reminiscent of the line of contemporary female writers, those writers involved in plain-spoken domestic morality and bliss in the affectionate home. We should never forget, however, that in the domestic sphere where women seemed to have appropriated to themselves was also a place for the gothic stories and their authors, male and female, such as Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick. Melville seems to be with them. In his *Closet Writing*, James Creech, as a queer critic of Melville, suggests with a pun that when Melville was distant from home he was at home, and that when at home he was uneasy (74).

I should mention here some of the foregoing research. Both Murray and Creech fail to explore Melville's yearning for the establishment of his author-

ship. Charles J. Haberstroh, Jr. and Michael Paul Rogin are compelling in their criticism in their chronological analyses of Melville's works, but regrettably, they stop short of detailing Melville's authorship. In his *Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America*, Michael Newbury advances another step forward to conclude that Melville believed himself to share the same fate of factory girls and literary women, i. e., a future of slavish labor as an automata in commercially developed society, and thus was unable to "retrieve an idealized mode of artistry [authorship]" (62). Melville was not able to retrieve that mode through ornamental craft labor, unlike Nathaniel Hawthorne, who adulated craftsmen in short works such as "The Artist of the Beautiful," and "Ethan Brand." Regrettably again, neither Newbury, nor Haberstroh, nor Rogin have answered the following problem: with what devices, devices distinct from those of female writers, did Melville implement his fragile authorship? Are these devices to be detected in *Billy Budd*? Or did he relinquish his hope of establishing his authorship as a credential beyond his control and not to be meddled with?

II. Gender Binaries under Nascent American Capitalism

Before starting our main discussion, we will see whether the gender binaries would bear any substantial significance for our analyses. As we have just seen in the above chapter of this thesis, Melville cultivated a proclivity similar to a female writer and developed an affinity for the young female workers of the sweatshop, the girls wrested of their own subjectivity to secure their utility for the production of standard goods. Melville, however, claimed to be a writer independent of the pressures from mass-producing industrialized society. With his literary fame in precipitous decline after the publication of *Pierre*,

Melville bore a deep grudge against women in general and the middle-class female reading public in particular. When we recall the emphasis made by the contemporary best-selling female writers upon the affectionate middle-class home, we must concede the dissimilarity insurmountable by and to Melville, who, despite his feministic stance, lived in a far-from-affectionate home, his spirit defeated, disgruntled, and deplored. “They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. . . . All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.” In the family Bible, he placed “three checks at the beginning of Chapter 19 of the Book of Job and double lines along the right margin beside verses 13 through 19” (Cohen and Yanella 75-76). Apparently, Melville contented himself with social-ostracism, but let off the steam in a way rather harmful to himself and his surroundings. As Elizabeth Renker faithfully reports, Melville transformed himself into a domestic tyrant, violent against his own wife and children, while his own family mistook him for a lunatic. These personal experiences of Melville’s are one of the compelling proofs that the author must have distanced himself from his contemporary best-selling female writers and opposed himself to their staple, i. e., the domestic ideology.

The emergent mass culture in the Euro-American nascent capitalistic societies of the nineteenth century specifically targeted middle-class women by focusing on the affective sphere of these women and their private lives. Eventually, this mass culture solidified the construction of the domestic household that was to determine gender relations. Though this could tempt us to observe that the mass-production capitalism of the nineteenth century was harmonious with women and domesticity, the *mélange* of nineteenth-century mass culture was much more complicated than we are likely to guess. As hor-

rendously put by Karl Marx, the systems of mass-production under capitalism were rather incongruous with the domesticity represented by women, the safe haven presumed to lie sacred and uncontaminated by capitalism, though domesticity was complicit with capitalism in rejuvenating workers. This conflicting feature of mass culture might empower and simultaneously disempower middle-class women, the women presumably blessed with that culture. On the one hand it might empower them by giving them their due right to articulate themselves and endowing them with a power subversive and disruptive to the high-brow elite-male-dominant establishment. And yet, it might disempower them: when absorbed into the cultural mainstream, the otherwise potentially dangerous power of resistance was deflected, attenuated, and worse still, enfeebled into consent, allowing the hegemonic capitalistic power to remain intact. Thus, the nature of mass culture and the subjectivity of those who lived in that culture have been pessimistically interpreted by the scholars in the Foucauldian school. Moreover, mass culture is positively but ironically handled by those in Americanism, the school putatively represented by Sacvan Bercovitch, whose insistence is that the American ideology for consensus, identity, and cohesion could subsume even the harsh criticism of American society for the way America was. This unique critique of Bercovitch's could be effectively applied not only to the popular female writers who fixed their targets at the low- and middle-brow, but could also to their counterparts, a niche of male writers [Melville included] whose *customers* were the highbrow. Bercovitch warns us not to hastily agree with Matthiessen's extolment of the canonical writers, those male writers in American Renaissance who, according to Matthiessen, radically championed independence, individualism, enterprise, liberty, and American democracy. Rather, the core of the issue, we should

concede, seems to be that the nascent capitalistic society of America could further blur the differentiations between the genders, male and female, and between elitist and mass cultures. Thus, the aim of this thesis should not be a gender-specified analysis of Melville's authorship, but rather an examination of Melville's authorship, the authorship formulated by the author under the influence of the American Way.

III. (Un)Trammeled in the American Way

In Matthiessen's claim for American literary radicalism, there is an underlying assumption—an assumption rounded up by Bercovitch that “Americans since the Puritans . . . have located personal meanings in American history; they have confused American life with their own salvation; it may deprive the writer or the political actor of an independent place to stand” (Bercovitch, *Origins* 173). Small wonder, then, that, in the days when American imperialism emerged, the idea of authorial sovereignty is genealogically related to the imperialistic and nationalistic notion about the right of property, the right supposedly reinforcing individual freedom. This concept was expounded by William Blackstone, an English jurist and professor, the author of a treatise on common law called *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. If the two elements, American democracy and freedom, were to somehow strangely but virtually conjoin in the imperialistic nation-building of America in the nineteenth century, then Melville, the democratically minded radical, must have deeply engaged himself in that political implication and reacted in a complicated way.

One might guess that Blackstone was highly praised by Melville, but in fact he was not. In *Billy Budd*, one might expect Melville to acknowledge the erudition of Blackstone in his profession. To the contrary, the author rather con-

temptuously alludes to him as one ill-informed of "obscure spiritual places" into which, "[unlike] the Hebrew prophets," the honorable jurist, "[could not] shed light" (75). Aside from Melville's ridicule of Blackstone, I should emphasize Melville's ambiguous views over the American Way, the ideology of so-called Manifest Destiny, the imperialistic ideology of the *progress* of America, the progress in terms of territorial expansion, in the nineteenth century. In fact, Melville went so far as to darken the future of America with sarcastic banter against Evert A. Duyckinck and John L. O'Sullivan (coiner of the phrase Manifest Destiny), the two pillars of the literary group among the miscellaneous fellowships, the fellowships subsumed under the sobriquet of "Young America," "[t]he sobriquet . . . that appeared across the pages of magazines, newspapers, and printed pamphlet speeches throughout the 1840s and 1850s" (Kerrigan). Incidentally, various cliques among the "Young Americans" were multidimensional (political and literary), egalitarian (sympathetic with the European revolutions of 1848, and the post-revolution refugee), and intriguingly, imperialistic (clamorous for Cuba, Canada, and Mexico) as well: in a word, self-contradictory and ambiguous. Even Abraham Lincoln became enthusiastic about "Young America." Lincoln described:

We have all heard of Young America. . . . As Plato had for the immortality of the soul, so Young America has "pleasing hope—a fond desire—a longing after" territory. . . . He is a great friend of humanity; and his desire for land is not selfish, but merely an impulse to extend the area of freedom. He is very anxious to fight for the liberation of enslaved nations and colonies, provided always, they have land, and have not any liking for his interference.¹

In *Moby-Dick*, Melville spitefully names the monstrous whale Dick, after the *Dick*, the ship of O'Sullivan's father. O'Sullivan's father had been falsely arrested in 1823 for piracy by an American agent in Buenos Aires and had left his widowed wife and son the \$20,000 he had received as compensation from the U. S. government. With that indemnification, O'Sullivan Jr. published the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, a periodical which carried the works of Thoreau, Whitman, and Hawthorne.² In addition to these writers, men of letters such as Cornelius Mathews, William A. Jones, Parke Godwin, and Evert A. Duyckinck flocked to O'Sullivan. *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, published by O'Sullivan, was "the leading spokesman for American literary and political nationalism" (Rogin 72). If the whaler [the *Pequod*] in *Moby-Dick* represents exploitative capitalism under white male domination, then the naming of the ship *Dick* signifies an explicit accusation against O'Sullivan for his imperialistic political stance. As for Duyckinck, another leading Young American, Melville alluded to him deridingly in two chapters of *Pierre* through mention of a "Young America in Literature" and "Pierre, as a Juvenile Author, Reconsidered." These allusions incensed Duyckinck and drove him to break off his friendship with Melville for at least four years.

If the American Way refers to democracy, which it does not, can Melville be assumed to have flown the flag? The answer is No. After the death of his father, Melville's family faced a financial crisis. Though still in his boyhood, he saw neither bright future nor new possibilities. Resignedly, he accepted his demoted status as a failed patrician forced to make continuous compromises. Under these compromised circumstances, he came to view American democracy pessimistically and distortedly. In the first place, recall that Ahab of *Moby-Dick*, another radical defier, insists on an erratic democracy that can nul-

lify the differentiation between the man represented by Captain Ahab and the God embodied by the white monstrous whale. Recall that Ahab exploits the riffraff in American society and the colored in Africa and Southeast Asia as a representative of the American imperial capitalism, although he forgets the rule of capitalism, the rule of gaining maximum profit at minimum cost, in investing all of his resources on vengeance for the loss of his leg. Recall, however, that Ahab is as a democrat disobedient to God as well as a tyrant over his men. In the second place, we should note that the author dedicated *Billy Budd* to Jack Chase, a man who embodied all the core qualities of the lost father in the author's earlier tale, *Redburn* (1849), i. e., the qualities of gentlemanliness, genteelness, and literateness, or to describe them differently, the aristocratic sophistications. This assuredly suggests an authorial penchant for aristocracy. In the third place, let us remember that Melville acknowledged Hawthorne for appreciating *Moby-Dick*, and wrote to him by candidly confessing this: "In my proud, humble way—a Shepard-king, —I was lord of a little vale in the solitary Crimea; but you have now given me the crown of India" [November 1851] (*Corres.* 212). The allusion to the empires suggests Melville's narcissism, desire for personal aggrandizement, lingering attachment for feudalistic hierarchy, and most important, authorial aspirations. In the fourth place, we should take account of the following historical background. Melville had passed his peak as a successful, commercially flattered writer by the middle of the nineteenth century, and the boundaries of [the imperial slogan of] Manifest Destiny and Jacksonian reform [for democracy], meanwhile, had dissolved into a single entity (Dimock 106). Rejected by the reading consumers of the middle class, and perceiving himself to be injured by imperial readers, Melville must have likened himself to a victim of imperial commer-

cialism who shared the fate of the disposed, the infantilized, and the reformed at a time when the influence of the reform movement pervaded middle-class American society, when society supported the forceful institutionalization of the lunatic,³ and when Melville himself was mistaken for a lunatic. He was literally relegated to the sidelines of society, to a position where, theoretically speaking, it was much easier to imagine the experience of being powerless and to be united with the powerless. However, the forsaken writer did not substantiate his once otherwise quixotic ultra-democratic aspiration to become the Ahabian warrior for a drastic democracy in which God and man were to be eventually equalized. Melville no longer held his passionate praise and nostalgia for the European revolutions of 1848. This loss of passion and nostalgia was evinced in the bluntness of Melville's reply to Sarah Morewood,⁴ who had recommended that he see the triumphant American tour of Louis Kossuth, a heroic Hungarian who had temporarily fled to America as a refugee after his country had failed in an attempt to gain independence from Austria. Melville replied to Morewood ungraciously: "if he [Kossuth] left home to look after Hungary, the cause in hunger [sic] would suffer" ["Letter to Duyckinck," Dec. 1851].

You may come to suspect, in perusing the foregoing remarks by Melville himself cited from different stages of his career, from his literary debut to his declining years, that I have ignored and jumbled the ways in which Melville may have developed, changed, and disconnected with himself. Yet a statement in *Moby-Dick* will allay such a suspicion: "There is no steady untracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause:—through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless faith, adolescence's doubt (the common doom), then skepticism, then disbelief,

resting at last in manhood's pondering response of If. But once gone through, we trace the round again; and infants, boys, and men, and Ifs eternally" (492).

The fact that Melville did not fly the flag for democracy, however, does not necessarily suggest that Melville was uncontaminated from the political movement for the American skewed democracy, the Manifest Destiny, the American Way, the American imperialism. I should hurriedly add that, as the postmodernist critic Michel Foucault stipulates, there is no purely apolitical realm within the apparently free-willed [subjective] entity; that unbeknownst to that entity, the apolitical is under the sway of the political. Below, I will untangle the knots of Melville's psychologically tensioned engagement with and disengagement from the American Way in his repeatedly failed attempts at establishing authorship.

IV. Melville's Jingoism in *Billy Budd*

A. Melville, Hawthorne, America, and Jingoism

What are the conceivable devices expedient for augmenting fragile authorship, the devices available to Melville—the writer as the (un)patriotic, (non)committal, (im)puissant sailor-champion for the (once ardent) democrat? How did Melville let his conflicting political stances coexist within himself? How did Melville convert these political elements into something accessible to his professionalism and authorship? We should be scrupulous enough not to lower him into a rut or incriminate him for renegading into a reactionary, though this seems to be what several post-colonialists have indiscreetly done. We cannot predicate Melville's contradictory features of egalitarianism (populism) and/or despotism (sado-masochism) as whimsical. Nor

can we dismiss them as groundless. In retracing the author's trial for the augmentation of his authorship, we must backdate our probation into Melville's early story, *Redburn* (1849), to heed Harry Bolton, an artistic sailor cast into the inartistic circumstances of the navy. Bolton is a counterpart to Melville, the author who was rejected by an unrefined reading public. In the first place, we note Harry's pointedly emphasized femininity: "one of those small, but perfectly formed beings, with curling hair, and silken muscles," whose "complexion was a mantling brunette, feminine as a girl's," whose eyes were "large, black, and womanly," and whose "voice was as the sound of a harp" (216). He is unable to climb the mast, the symbolic sexual object, and untalented for the other physical manly work imposed upon the sailor, but he possesses a talent for singing so spellbindingly that even the rough, unschooled sailors are transformed into "charmed leopards and tigers" (278). Indeed, he is an androgynous Orphic singer, "a culture hero of a [theoretically] subversive sort because of his ambiguous gender identity" (Martin 53). However, Harry succumbs to his fate of fritting away his subversive singing power, only to please those unable to appreciate art. His resigned attitude reminds us of the commercially oriented art market of nineteenth-century America, where singing could only bring in profits if adapted to the tastes of the rich in the salons, the rich but incapable of art. We are also led into wondering if the same can be said of writers who, like Melville, were expected to meet the demands of the reading public, the educated but artistically unrefined middle-class readers, and in the worst case forced to behave as a mere scribbler or scrivener in the vein of *Bartleby*, the weired clerk in "*Bartleby*" (1853), the short story where the proud sense of professionalism is hard to come by and the yearning for creativity is emasculated. Melville was gender-ambiguous not physically, but

emotionally, and thus shared with Harry the sense of being forced into an artistically compromised position in which politically democratic beliefs (in the comradeship with fellow sailors, outcast and illiterate though they may be) are in conflict with his artistry (or the refinement typical to the educated class).

Refraining from jumping into the hasty conclusion that the author transformed into a reactionary authentic writer, we should rather be allowed to adopt the deductive logic, to refer to Kohut's psychoanalytic adumbration, and thus to test the validity of identifying Melville as one of those individuals: individuals afflicted with a propensity for shame and a readiness for rage. For the moment, we will briefly observe Melville's private history by way of seeking the roots of his rage and shame. Outshined by his brilliant elder brother, the petted first born Gansevoort, Herman Melville in childhood must have felt rejected by his own parents. Later, in his adulthood, he was rejected again by Nathaniel Hawthorne, a man he revered as a nationally famous canonical writer. Nathaniel Hawthorne, who had left Melville (and who thus, in Melville's eyes, had deserted and betrayed him), was the closest person to whom Melville could be good. Ravaged ceaselessly by the shame and torment of these experiences of abandonment, he must have ultimately shut down, succumbing to a condition similar to what today would be described as PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). We can understand the fatal effects of Hawthorne's rejection of Melville if we understand that Melville looked upon Hawthorne as a father substitute and fancifully re-experienced Hawthorne's death as a permanent desertion. To repeat: Melville had been outshined by his smarter elder brother, shamed by the favoritism of his father (and mother), and shamed again by Hawthorne. These experiences, fraught with shame and defeat, enraged and shamed Melville ceaselessly throughout his

life. The parallels between Melville and the above-mentioned Harry—Harry lacks an ideal audience; Melville loses his only appreciator, Hawthorne—clearly evinces the exacerbated instability of Melville’s and Harry’s sense of profession. The depiction of Harry’s difficulties might have aroused Melville’s anger, redoubled his anguish, and beset him with difficulties in making his authorship steadfast.

If we defer to the Freudian psychologist Kohut again, it follows that the narcissist satisfies himself in finding his gleaming image reflected in the eyes of his mother, and that his hallucinative self esteem and personal aggrandizement are augmented when he becomes symbolically “merge[d] with an idealized parental surrogate” (Adamson 213). Yet in the case of the gender-ambiguous writer Melville, the direct application of Oedipal complex theory or the boy’s emotional attachment with the mother should be avoided: given that the theory seems uncritically premised on the heterosexual norm in the nineteenth-century middle-class family, the theory fails to subsume the case of Melville, i. e., the case of a paternal figure predominant over a son’s psyche, where that figure in question is not the genuine article but the substitute. Joseph Adamson describes a pattern that “runs throughout Melville’s work[s]” (231): the hero idealizes the parental imago, merges himself with the imago, and seeks in the end his personal aggrandizement. Regrettably, Adamson neglects to fully explicate Melville’s final work, *Billy Budd*. In Melville’s fictional world we observe the fantasy of a titanic human form and personal aggrandizement as best illustrated in the personage of Ahab. In the real world where Melville lived, however, this fantasy becomes translatable to, or inclusive of, his sense of authorship. This leads to a question: Who was the idealized parental figure for Melville? It was Nathaniel Hawthorne, the nationally admired

and canonized author. Melville admired Hawthorne not just literally and jocularly, but passionately, homoerotically, and even with a solemn reverence. As he himself describes—"I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the supper," and that "we are the pieces. Hence this infinite fraternity of feeling" [November 1851] (*Corres.* 212)—Melville found in Hawthorne a God-like entity, just as Emerson found a God-like entity in himself. Melville scattered references to the Old and New Testaments in his letter to Hawthorne, and thus equated Hawthorne's books as sacred scrolls in the Ark of the Covenant. Melville had fallen in love with Hawthorne: "by confessing him, you thereby confess others; you brace the whole brotherhood" ("Hawthorne and His Mosses," Lyda ed., 414), and in his ecstasy, "... already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germanous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further and further, shoots his strong New England roots in the hot soil of my Southern soul" ("Mosses," 417). By way of tendering his gratitude to him for appreciating *Moby-Dick*, Melville wrote to Hawthorne half-frolicly and half-ecstatically, "your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours" [November 1851] (*Corres.* 212).

Not surprisingly, when the emerging capitalistic America was imbued with that imperialistic slogan, or what O'Sullivan called Manifest Destiny, and when America was thus apotheosized, the image of Hawthorne in Melville's psyche can be easily converted into the image of America, the land Melville geographically analogized to Hawthorne: "The smell of your beeches and hemlocks is upon him [Hawthorne]; your own broad prairies are in his soul; and if you travel away inland into his deep and noble nature, you will hear the far roar of his Niagara" ("Mosses," 414). "Hawthorne is to be admired . . . be-

cause his authorial geography mirrors the nation's" (Dimock 9-10). Wai-chee Dimock expounds that "to clothe [one's] personal woes in the mantle of public injuries" or "to harness the public in order to signify the private," "one take[s] [the form of] an imperial self" (77). Through that transposition of the vulnerable self into the nation [hence, an imperial self], powerlessness has a shape and a logic of his own, even though that logic is erroneous, like the slogan of the imperial Manifest Destiny, the slogan cloaked in the pretext of American democracy and its geological, cultural, political, and economical independence from England. We can argue that the exchangeability between the American polity and the canonical writer Hawthorne is not extravagant within Melville's psyche. To support this argument we can refer to Joseph Adamson, the psychoanalytic critic who recounts that individuals eager "to cure their shame and provide them[selves] with a feeling of enormous strength, to which they react with relief and triumph," tend to be consumed by the urge "to melt into the body of a powerful nation [in Melville's case, America] (as symbolized by a grandiose leader [Hawthorne])" (173). Though having seen wistfully in the image of Hawthorne, now deceased, the image held in remembrance, Melville transferred his emotional attachment from Hawthorne to America. There is much justice in this assumption, just as there is in the following statement by Dimock:

It makes sense that America should strike Melville as the ultimate model for authorship, for what the nation has to offer is what the author needs to learn: a form of governance, a form of legitimation and subordination, license and control. Melville's authorial enterprise can be seen, in this regard, as a miniature version of the national enterprise. It can be seen,

more specifically, as a miniature version of Manifest Destiny—understood here not as a specific set of events, but as an informing logic of freedom and dominion, a logic that underwrites not only what Michael Rogin calls the “internal imperialism” of an expansionist nation, but also what (following John L. O’Sullivan) we might call the “great experiment of liberty” of the literary self. (Dimock 10)

The “‘liberty’ of the literary self” here can be equated to the subjectivity of the author: authorship. We are now ready to retrace, in Melville’s last novel *Billy Budd*, any signs that might attest to the author’s last-ditch but failed trial for substantiating authorship, his injured sense of professionalism, formulated under nascent imperialistic capitalism. In my hunt for these signs to follow, I will make use of apagogical argument (*reductio ad absurdum*) by tentatively adopting the hypothesis underlying Dimock’s statement above—that America should strike Melville as the ultimate model for authorship [hence Melville’s jingoism]—in order that I may correct the hypothesis later if necessary.

Bercovitch may be justified in assuming that “[the man-of-war] *Bellipotent* into which [Billy] is thrust is Melville’s contemporary America” (“Billy lashes out at Claggart/America’s ‘lies’”) (“Melville’s Search,” 226–7), hence it is not inappropriate to discuss nineteenth-century American society as a society placed within a particular context concurrent with the reinforcement of the British Royal Navy during the transition from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth. England and America both devoted themselves to expansions of their own territories, England impelled by the need for a market and America by the need to avoid class conflict, at more or less the same time. President Jackson, a leading advocate of a policy known as “Indian Removal,” expected

to avert antagonism by making large quantities of cheap land available. As Pazicky states, “disposing the Indians of their lands was integral to the rise of capitalism and the economic growth of the new republic” (65). Consciously or unconsciously, Melville immersed himself in an American imperialism or American imperialistic democracy justified by the principles of Jacksonian democracy.

B. Jingoism in Disguise Exposed

B. 1. Claggart

We can glimpse Melville’s poise as a patriot in Claggart, the master-at-arms who evinces and overplays loyalty to Captain Vere when he falsely identifies Billy as the ringleader of a possible mutiny. The analogy of Melville to Claggart is not completely off the mark, as neither can win the exclusive love from the father (-surrogate). Melville was not able to enjoy paternal love, the love which, in his eyes was partly squandered upon his elder brother Gansevoort. Claggart, likewise is not able to earn the love of Vere, the love which in his eyes, is lavished entirely upon Billy. What’s more, both Melville and Claggart destroy their sensitive selfhoods by cutting themselves off from the joy of parental love, the love supposedly given equally and fairly to (those analogized to) siblings (in the regimented naval hierarchy). Several equations follow from this analogy between Melville and Claggart. Just as Claggart is driven to the Satanic deed against Billy, propelled by the desire to offset his injured selfhood, so Melville might have been propelled by his shamed sense of selfhood, and, by extension, his authorship. Just as the affectation of patriotism helps Claggart satisfy his genuine desire to hide his malice against Billy, so

setting the background of the story in the age of imperialism might have helped Melville mask his real design of establishing his imperial authorship.

The manner in which Claggart destroys Billy's good name by concocting the frame-up for the suspected mutiny to help the captain is theatrical and attitudinizing: "the master-at-arms, ascending from his cavernous sphere, made his appearance, cap in hand by the mainmast respectfully waiting the notice of Captain Vere"; "Ah, your honor!" sighed Claggart, mildly shaking his shapely head as in sad depreciation of such unmerited severity of [Vere's] tone. Then, bridling—erecting himself as in virtuous self-assertion—he circumstantially alleged certain words and acts which collectively, if credited, led to presumptions mortally inculcating Budd" (96). Despite having "no prior nautical experience entering the navy at mature life, and despite necessarily being allotted at the start to the lowest grade in it" (65), Claggart's apparent loyalty to British imperialism and his undisguised careerism in the *homosocial* hierarchy (to use the jargon [*Homosocial*] coined by the feminist critic Sedgwick to explain the dynamics of the female-exclusive but apparently heterosexually disciplined Euro-American society) are successful, insofar as they lead to his timely promotion into the rank of petty officer. His apparent careerism in the meritocracy of the navy is, however, motivated by a wish to be recognized by the paternal Vere, or even by an insatiable hunger for homoerotical love from Vere. We have seen that Claggart exploits nationalism, and thus overacts rather unnaturally as an ardent jingoist. We can infer that the author's support for the American Way/capitalistic imperialism was artificial, or even a sham. As for artificiality, Melville in *Moby-Dick* cites the following passage from Hobbes's *Leviathan*: "By art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State in Latin, Civitas—which is but an artificial man, though of

greater stature than the natural, for whose protection and defense it was intended . . . ” (xxii). The English word ‘city’ comes from the Latin ‘Civitas,’ and it is no accident that the man-of-war *Bellipotent* evokes in the mind of the narrator “Cain’s city and citified man” (53). America, unlike Europe, was an artificial polity created in a promised land where men (meaning the chosen Puritans) made a contract with God to create a heaven on earth. We thus are shown the triplet of the artificial—the political state(s) [America], the state of Claggart’s mind, and the state of Melville’s mind. Moreover, we can posit that just as Claggart’s excessive jingoistic posturing backfires, making him repulsive in the eyes of Captain Vere, Melville’s imperialistic posture may have worked against the establishment of his authorship. To help us rate the effectiveness of Melville’s literary theft of imperialism as an artifice for establishing authorship, the next section will investigate whether Captain Vere’s ostentatious pose as a patriot ultimately (mal)functions.

B. Jingoism in Disguise Exposed

B.2. Vere

Though portrayed as an edgy wit with a “marked leaning toward everything intellectual” (62), Vere is so distraught by Claggart’s deceitful warning against Billy that he loses confidence in keeping his partial love for the young sailor. Claggart knows that a self-aggrandizing narcissistic group leader in Captain Vere’s position would be inclined to treat as a traitor or enemy any person who dares to question the omniscience of the leader and the omnipotence of the leader over the group he leads. Claggart applies that knowledge to Vere, whose hidden heroism and yearning for fame and self-aggrandizement are

critically undermined (Adamson 173). From this we can infer that one of the crucial elements that connect the three—Claggart, Vere, and the author—is the pathological sense of vulnerable selfhood that they all share. If Claggart's/Vere's injured sense of selfhood is a euphemism for Melville's injured sense of authoritative professionalism, and if Vere's injured sense of selfhood is, like that of Claggart's, premised upon jingoism, then we would know, from the syllogism and parallelism among the three (Claggart, Vere, and Melville), that it is worthwhile to probe into Vere's jingoism. Here we can hypothesize that by behaving as they do, these three (Claggart, Vere, and Melville) expose themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as sham nationalists or mere plagiarizers of nationalism. Indeed, nationalism is expedient for them *to a certain extent*. As I have suggested, nationalism presumably helps Claggart sink his hook into Vere, whereas ultimately this affected nationalism “provoke[s] [in Vere] a vaguely repellant distaste” (91), forcing Vere to perceive the image of Claggart superimposed with the image of the perjurer Vere once witnessed. As for Vere, nationalism may be effective in buttressing his sensitive selfhood, but not enough. On the contrary, his nationalism runs the risk of becoming burdensome or disadvantageous. We thus turn now to a discussion of the inadequacy of patriotism as a sustenance for Vere's heroism.

Several unmistakable clues call into question Vere's loyalty to British imperialism. The narrator in *Billy Budd* informs us that Vere “deviate[s] from general custom” (104), disregarding the naval rule in holding a drumhead court without referring to or consulting with the admiral of the squadron, the officer in the higher position. Vere's dissimulated patriotism and allegiance to the King betray his hidden ambition to win fame, an ambition wholly independent of allegiance or patriotism. Cognizant of this, the sharp-eared around Vere

must detect some measure of irony and reproach in Billy's sheepish replies, his replies without rancor or spite, during the interrogation of the drumhead court: "Captain Vere tells the truth. It is just as Captain Vere says . . . I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King" (106). The narrator also blurts out that Vere, like his role model, the heroic British aristocratic Nelson, is obsessively stuck to and corrupted by the outmoded concept of attention-seeking heroism/narcissism at a time when "in encounters there [on the sea] a certain kind of displayed gallantry [is] fallen out of date as hardly applicable under changed circumstances" (56). True to his byname Starry, Vere shows off his show-off character, but ultimately he becomes the target of indirect aspersion when his role model Nelson is harshly condemned: "Nelson's ornate publication of his person in battle was not only unnecessary, but not militarily, nay, savored of foolhardiness and vanity" (57). Of course, there is an unbridgeable gap between Nelson and Vere: the former's name is writ indelibly in history while the latter's is completely obliterated (even a naval chronicle stops short of recording Vere's death). Vere's posture of heroism and factitiously displayed patriotism is that of outmoded patriotism in an age when ironclads replace the wooden sailing vessel, the vessel characterized as "poetic," "sightly," "symetr[ical]" (57). Just as the old battleship has become obsolete, so Vere's self-glorious heroism, the brand of heroism that invokes Ahab's reckless bearing, is doomed to become inoperative. Just as the feudal aristocracy is taken over by the middle class, so the Honorable Edward Fairfax Vere, whose ancestor Fairfax is mentioned in Andrew Marvell's poem, is to be taken over by the *nouveaux riches* in the imperialist-capitalist, survival-of-the-fittest society. People like Vere were expected to be excluded from the mainstream of the middle-class society of the nineteenth century, just as the Indian

of the American society, an ethnic minority recorded in Francis Parkman's *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851), was "destined to melt and vanish before the advancing waves of Anglo American power" (qtd. in Dimock 116). The Indian, the "lordly savage" as John Quincy Adams [presidency: 1825-29] described him, "perished not in spite of but because of his 'stateliness,' his 'heroic virtues,' his 'fine figure, commanding voice, noble beauty'" (qtd. in Dimock 118), while Vere, narcissistically aware of his own masculine beauty, secretly dreams of the "ornate publication of his person" (57). According to the Anglo-centric ideology, the Indian was doomed to embark on the road to extinction for no other reason than his stubborn refusal to accommodate himself to civilized lifestyle. Like the Indian, Vere is stubborn in not socializing with the others: "With minds less stored than his and less earnest, some officers of his rank, with whom he would necessarily found him lacking in the companionable quality, a dry and bookish gentleman, as they deemed" (63). Both the Indian and Vere are under the sway of incorrigible individualism and self-government, Emersonian self-reliance in the negative sense, the type of individualism characterized "not just by enclosure but equally by exclusion and by marking the self's boundary against a companion domain, that of the 'extraneous,' posited as outside the self" (Dimock 137).

From what we have seen above, we understand that Vere's posture of patriotism and heroism is not neutral or simply outmoded or laming, but fatal. If Vere's jingoism is implemental to and necessary for the establishment of Melville's authorship, how fatal is it to the author? If disguised patriotism is truly fatal to Vere, then can Melville's disguised imperialism be seen as damaging to his authorship? More importantly, why did Melville dare to invest in his authorship if he was aware of this fatality to begin with? Or to put it differ-

ently, was this disguised imperialism actually fatal? Whether it is fatal or not depends on Billy, as Billy is supportive of Captain Vere and thus indirectly supportive of the author Melville as well. If Billy's mode of existence is soothing enough to offset the damages that Claggart and Vere incur, then Melville could confidently assert his authorship. If Dimock is correct in saying that Melville lets his authorship become appropriative and exploitative under the sway of capitalistic imperialism of the nineteenth-century America, "invest [ing] *his* story in the story of *others*, to appropriate *their* ordeal for *his* subjective figuration" (Dimock 79, italics mine), and if the one of *other* to be discursively exploited in the work is Billy, then we need to determine, in the next section, how exploitatively Melville portrayed Billy and how (un)successful this portrayal was for the establishment of Melville's authorship.

B. Jingoism in Disguise Exposed

B.3. Melville's Depiction of Billy

Now let us turn to the relation between Melville's authorship and the way he depicted Billy, the counterpart to Vere and Claggart, both of whom are educated, sophisticated, and privileged. Billy's mental status as illicitness, and his physical portrayal as "a fine specimen of the *genus homo*, who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adams before the Fall" (94), functions as a harsh criticism of modern civilized western society. Moreover, Billy's by-name, i. e., Handsome Sailor, together with his history as an orphan from the port town Bristol, bring to light the possibility of his racially mongrel status. Two details suggest this latter possibility: first, the best example of the Handsome Sailor, whom the narrator remembers having met fifty years be-

fore, is "a native African of the unadulterated blood of Ham" (43); second, Billy is born in a multiracial port town to probably a sailor and a prostitute, either of whom may be colored. Billy is forcefully impressed to the British navy just as Africans are transported for slave labor. Billy is also related to the Indian, as well as to the Black, through his identity as an uneducated, primitive, and heathenish orphan. From their immigration to the New Continent, the Puritans thought up many ways to convince themselves of their identity as God's children. In their sophistry they cooked up orphans, the beings not defined as God's children, and those beings who lived close at hand, available at any time for markedly setting the contrast between themselves as the God's chosen and the damned. Though the Puritans were much closer, as migrants from England, to the orphanhood, or, in a way, to the outcasts, than to the favored children or God's chosen, they displaced their own status of orphanhood onto others, others like the Indian. The Puritans applied this logic of orphan to the heretical as well. There was a document about a *monstrous* and *misshapen* child, stillborn to Mary and William Dyer, the Familists. The Dyres were said to be "notoriously infected with Mrs. Hutchinson's errors," and the eerie birth in question was uncovered on the very day when Hutchinson was cast out of the church. Without saying, Anne Hutchinson was a staunch antinomian and therefore regarded as heretical. The following account is taken from Gov. John Winthrop's Journal, the *History of New England 1630-1649*:

It was a woman child, stillborn, about two months before the just time, having life a few hours before. . . . it had a face, but no head, and the ears stood upon the shoulders and were like an ape's; it had no forehead, but over the eyes four horns, hard and sharp; two of them were above one inch long, the other two shorter; the eyes standing out, and the mouth

also; the nose hooked upward; all over the breast and back full of sharp pricks and scales, like a thornback; the navel and all the belly, with the distinction of the sex, were where the back should be, and the back and hips before, where the belly should have been; behind, between the shoulders, it had two mouths, and in each of them a piece of red flesh sticking out; it had arms and legs as other children; but, instead of toes, it had on each foot three claws, like a young fowl, with sharp talons. (rootsweb.com)

You might imagine that Billy's identity as religiously heretical and racially ambiguous may furnish ammunition for a scathing indictment of the notion of the Euro-American centrality, but let us recall our hypothesis that the author pitches his authorship on the imperial capitalism in nineteenth-century America.

Paradoxically, Melville needed only an opposing party, the party not the fierce nor the lordly but the "meek and jolly . . . [though] at heart as savage" (Dimock 126). By subsuming the portrayal of the dangerous party in his story, Melville could locate his imperial authorship in the imperial American society of his day. It thus stands as no surprise that the drumhead court charges the submissive Billy, albeit mistakenly, with the mutiny, a crime akin to a slave uprising by the Black (once called the meek Samboes), in *Billy Budd*. More than half a century before Melville wrote *Billy Budd*, Thomas Jefferson [presidency: 1801-26] predicted the possibility of bloody slave uprising; of the sudden metamorphosis of the Black from a quaint and endearing Sambo to a hyper-masculinized-rapist. The Anglo-Saxons were actually nagged by pangs of conscience for what they had done to the racial others and misgivings that the racial others would take revenge. Emerson's sonorous

manifesto, that the past in the new continent had no reference to the future, or that the future was untrammelled by the past, did not appeared to be true.

Billy is ambiguous not just racially, but gender-wise as well: Billy has “as yet smooth face all but feminine in purity of natural complexion” (50). We find parallels between Billy and the women of the patriarchic society of the nineteenth century when we remember that Billy is deprived of the power of language much as a woman would be. Billy's poor command of language is evinced in part by his pained stutter and in part by his illiteracy and lack of education, shortcomings shared by the contemporary racial others, the Indians and Samboes. Billy's linguistic incapacity is also suggested by the analogies between Billy and women, who in the day were presumably reticent and virtually deprived of the right to speak. If women asserted themselves in the manner of the above-mentioned Anne Hutchinson, we may imagine the worst scenario: their dismissal as lunatics and their banishment to the fringes of the society. Yet these women/mothers/matters/materials, were necessary, as many feminists point out, for the benefits enjoyed by men of the apparently heterosexual patriarchic society—for maintenance, reproduction, and the enlargement of the society itself. Similarly, both Captain Vere and the author need the gender-ambiguous Billy as an instrument for resuscitating and augmenting their privileged subjectivity. In sum, we can safely assert that, in drawing Billy as a victim of imperialism, Melville “invest[ed] *his* story in the story of *others*, to appropriate *their* ordeal for *his* subjective figuration [meaning authorship]” (Dimock 79 *italics mine*). The author expediently subsumes the ordeals of the sufferers, of Billy, the Indian, and the Sambo, for the buildup of the author's authorship, by creating a more socio-historically scrupulous setting for the story, a setting into which he could encase himself.

Although Vere and the author can exploit the gender-wise ambiguous racial other [Billy] in order to confirm masculinity/imperialism-based selfhood [Vere] and masculinity/imperialism-based authorship [Melville], a problem still remains: Vere's masculinity reeks of artificiality and Melville's authorship is stenchy with the self-imposed flavor of the patriotism in his narrative. Vere's ostentatious masculinity and heroism rely on a patriotism that Vere imposes upon himself. In the same way, Melville's authorship forced upon the work the predominant tone of this sham imperialistic bearing. Right from the beginning of *Billy Budd*, Melville filled the work with a mood of artificiality and forcedness by referring to the system of impressment, the system that Billy so meekly obeys.

Conclusion: An Inkling of Coming Postmodernism

In the previous chapter, I have tentatively set forth the following hypothesis: America in imperialism, or the American Way, was likely to have stricken Melville as the ultimate model for authorship at a time when Jacksonian democracy and the imperial slogan of Manifest Destiny had dissolved into a single entity. Now it is high time to reconsider this hypothesis. Indeed, Melville availed himself of the late-eighteenth-century British imperialism, an imperialism propelled primarily by the aristocratic elite, a class fearful of the aftermath and anomic changes of the French Revolution, and transformed it into the nineteenth-century American imperialism, or the American Way, as a substitute. Though adopted by the aristocratic elite in England, British imperialism might have functioned as a catalyst or an accelerant to an authorship buildup that Melville coveted. The author must have known, however, that British imperialism could not necessarily be equated with the American expan-

sionism or imperialism, still less with the *ideal* form that he should have emulated. The outmoded aristocratic imperialism of Britain goes against Vere, and, similarly, American imperialism was likely to have been the complete opposite of what Melville intended to use for the establishment of authorship. However, the slight but not negligible difference between the two imperialisms, British and American, seems to be confusing but not unmixable in the minds of the author, who imposed, upon himself, this jumbled imperialism for the sake of conveniently settling his then illusory authorship. This mechanism left Melville's problem, the problem of coming to terms with a contemporary American imperial capitalism and mass-producing industrialism that overwhelmed *imperial* female readers, unresolved. Melville was still rejected and injured by the middleclass, specifically by the female reading consumers, or the *imperial* readers. He merely resorted to the aristocratic and elitist brand of imperialism and to the sham patriotism represented by Vere and Claggart. This explains his conflicting stance about democracy under American imperial capitalism, namely, his attitude wavering between the aristocratic and the deprived [racial or gender-wise other beings]. Towards the former he was both critical and adoring; towards the latter he was sympathetic and exploitative. We may thus reasonably affirm that his striving for merger with America, the ultimate model for authorship, or his mimicry of the American Way, eventually led him into the dystopian realm in which his authorship was unexpectedly imperiled and his sham imperialism protruded from the text grotesquely. Ironically, Melville's failure to establish his authorhood has (mis)led some critics (like Richard Chase) to claim that "[t]he greater the author. . . , the *less* he confirms authority, even his own, for the more he reveals the making of his own authority. . . . Melville is a 'great' author precisely because he exposes

the falsehood of authority” (Jehlen 7).

In the introduction of this thesis I questioned whether Melville had relinquished his hope of authorship as a matter not worth meddling with. Here in the conclusion to this thesis I can reply that to the contrary, Melville could not help but meddle with his authorship. Melville was in fact bound to it as Ahab is bound to the whale. Deliberately, monomaniacally, obsessively, Melville strove to establish his authorship even at the cost of disintegrating it, and did so up to the last days of his life. Psychologically speaking, authorship in Melville’s case could be a mutated form of narcissism, and Melville’s apparent show of respect for the adored object, the father-substitute or the nation, could be a symptom of his reversed narcissism. The farther the respected moved away from the respecer (Melville’s father and substitute father Hawthorne were both dead and gone, and the American polity was far from what Melville thought it should have been), the more artificial Melville’s theatrical treatment toward the former became (hence Melville’s protrusive jingoism). From a psychological standpoint, a policy of half-knowingly sticking to a way ineffective, unpractical, and harmful bespeaks a morbid refusal to accept what dawns on the neurotic or to admit what one does not want to admit. What was this in Melville’s case? It was an extremely postmodernistic proposition, the proposition of the death of the author. Metaphorically, writers are likely to leave their names on their own works to prove that they are the responsible agents, subjects, and legal claimants for what they have created. However, as Roland Barthes formulates, the text that the writer allegedly creates by himself is a texture that he pieces together by consciously or unconsciously absorbing a variety of voices—not a univocal (the putative writer’s) voice, but multivocal voices. In Melville’s case, the author did not adopt the imperialistic

tone of the story subjectively. Instead, the author of uncertain authorship, with his subjectivity deprived, was pathologically driven to adopt a self-imposed tone that clearly validated Barthes's opinion. Melville was under the control of his own imperialistic posture, a posture he thought he was under his control. In postmodernist thinking, that which is already disintegrating is the entity that has stipulated the norm, the entity to which people aspire: i. e., the allegedly transcendental other being such as God, currency, the nation, the world, the capital letter A representing the absolute other in Jacques Lacan's psychology, the ultimate and absolute that people think they should emulate themselves. Melville mistakenly stuck to one of these entities; the nation, America, and the American way. The nihilistic landscape where the once authoritative entities were beginning to disintegrate themselves loomed large on Melville at a time when modernism was being eroded with and supplanted by postmodernism. Melville met his own literal death while futilely defying the critical process by which postmodernism slowly but steadily undermined the notion of authority in the self-proclaimed author, and while forcing himself to accept the figurative notion of the death of an author. Melville died in 1891.

Notes

- 1 See Roy P. Bustler, ed., *Abraham Lincoln, Collected Works* 9 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers UP, 1953-55), III, 356-57, qtd. in Rogin 73.
- 2 O'Sullivan was Hawthorne's close friend. He became the godfather of Hawthorne's eldest daughter, Una, and "Uncle John" to Hawthorne's other children.
- 3 As for reform movement, see Evelev. "[The] reformist sensibility spread rapidly during the antebellum era. From antiprostitution to temperance to the abolition of slavery, reform movements galvanized antebellum Americans, particularly in the Northern cities. Debating the causes of this problem, historians have found sources in humanitarianism and altruism as well as class interest and social con-

trol. Many of these movements began under the aegis of an elite leadership, but the constituency of reformers at the mid-century came to take on a decidedly middle-class air. Whatever their causes or motives, reform movements became sites of identity formation and political action. They gave members of the new middle class a public forum which to express their values and make legitimate their place in society. Professionals and nonprofessionals alike, particularly women, found reform movements a potent way to reconstitute their cultural authority and to remake American life in their image” (60).

- 4 Sarah Morewood was known to have associated with cultured people. She organized parties, picnics, and little outings attended by Duyckinck, Holmes, Mathews, the Melvilles, and Hawthorne and his wife Sophia.

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Probating Melville's Posthumous Work, *Billy Budd*: Authorship in Self-Imposed Jingoism

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The best-selling female writers working in the nineteenth-century society of mass-producing imperialistic capitalism were not bashful in wooing their customers. Their rather straightforward responses to capitalistic pressure helped pave the way to the establishment of their authorships. Melville held views in common with these best-selling writers: both were sympathetic to the economically disadvantaged factory girls and critical of the male-dominated capitalistic society. Yet when Melville focused on domestic affairs and wrote sentimental but sensational stories in the vein same as the best-selling female writers, his topics drew harsh criticism for their sensationalism. Melville, unlike the women writers, must have taken these criticisms as wounding affronts to his professionalism, even his selfhood. This paper discussed how the author implemented his fragile authorship and the devices available to him for the establishment of his authorship. Melville's last novel, *Billy Budd*, is a final benchmark for judging the validity of his attempts to establish authorship.

My ensuing argument, however, is not premised on a gender-specific analysis, given that even the subversive power arising from proto-feminism writers was subsumed into consent by the American way or the overriding cohesive power that had Americanized dissenting opinions (and probably still is). Melville's strivings for authorial establishment should also be interpreted as strivings formulated under the inescapable influences of the American Way, American skewed democracy, so-called American Manifest Destiny (the political and literal movement for cultural and economical independence from England, or the slogan of territorial expansion), American imperialism.

Melville wavered between pro and con in his views towards American democracy, as exemplified by his treatment of Ahab in *Moby-Dick* as the absolute democrat defiant against God and merciless exploiter of the whaler crew. Melville can thus be said to have carried out a determined act for the establishment of his authorship as he was both trammeled and untrammeled under the American Way. This exemplifies the stipulation of the postmodernism critic Michel Foucault: there is no purely apolitical realm within an apparently free-willed subjective entity.

According to James Adamson, a Freudian psychoanalytical critic, Melville had a propensity to idealize the parental imago and thus to merge with that imago to satiate his hidden desire to aggrandize himself. In the case of Melville, the queer writer, the parent or substitute parent in question is Nathaniel Hawthorne, the canonical writer several years his senior, who in the psyche of Melville was homoerotically apotheosized and transformed into a polity of America (to be exact, the fall of Niagara). Wai-chee Dimock, the critic of cultural studies, points out that “Hawthorne is to be admired” “because his authorial geography mirrors the nation’s.” If allowed to refer to the conclusion of the psychoanalytical critic Joseph Adamson, I can argue the following. First, those suffering from shame and rage are eager to melt into a powerful nation, an American polity that can be equated with the image of Hawthorne. Second, we can hypothesize Dimock’s statement, i. e., that “[i]t makes sense that America should strike Melville as the ultimate model for authorship.” In the following analysis, we see how Melville deployed jingoism in his own work *Billy Budd* for the establishment of his authorship.

Claggart, the master-at-arms who hates the Handsome Sailor Billy in *Billy Budd*, is related to the author, in that neither man enjoys his due love from the paternal figure. There are several parallels between the two. Claggart pretends to be an ardent jingoist to curry the favor of the paternal figure Captain Vere, only to incur displeasure from him. Melville acts likewise in his trial to establish his authorship. In just the same vain as Claggart and Melville, Captain Vere, as an aristocratic and as a rather outmoded jingoist inflexible to modern society, also needs to mask his injured selfhood and thus pretends to

be an imperialistic nationalist. By virtue of his Indian-like adamancy, Vere moves to his own extinction, going the way of the Native Americans. Melville's posture as an imperialistic nationalist thus appeared to endanger his professional status in modern imperialistic capitalism. The only way Melville could have made this problem disappear would be to have portrayed Billy in a manner that offsets the disadvantageous circumstances implied by Claggart and Vere. While the apparently imperialistic author Melville succeeded in depriving this handsome young sailor of a command of language by depicting him as innocent, primitive, uneducated, and race- and gender-ambiguous, the author failed to keep his artificial imperialistic posture from protruding grotesquely.

In conclusion, we may reasonably affirm that Melville's strivings to merge with America, the ultimate model for authorship, through his mimicry of the American Way, American imperialism, challenged him to reconcile conflicting views of democracy and eventually led him into a dystopian realm that imperiled his authorship. Confoundingly, the author could not refrain from dissociating himself from his repeatedly failed attempts to establish authorship even when he was aware of his possible failure. The author already had an inkling of coming postmodernistic circumstances that would render all claims for authorship futile. Overcome by a pathological eagerness to deny the dawning of the new age, the author stuck to the outmoded way of establishing authorship.